

## [Mr. Paul's Story]

[Beliefs and customs?] - folkstuff [12?]

### MR. PAUL'S STORY

( Bowman )

(Introduction):- \*AM

On Tinton Avenue in the lower East Bronx, there is an old, three-story frame house. Thirty years ago, Tinton Avenue was a tree-lined, suburban street. Now it is bleak and stony. Apartment houses, old and new, blot out the sun. The little, private house is ever in shadow, gripped in the vise of two dirty, brick tenements.

Mr. P., a well-preserved, reticent man, 81 years of age, has lived in this old-fashioned house for the past 35 years. In his backyard he has a small garden, in which he cultivated flowers. This patch of earth, over which clotheslines, fire-escapes, aerial wires and tenement dust break the light, is Mr. P's last tangible relation with the old Bronx.

Suspicious at first, Mr. P. later warmed up a bit and gave a kaleidoscopic impression of the Bronx as it was years ago: names, places, habits and customs.

There is an organization in the Bronx called the Old Timers' Society. Mr. P. is one of its members. A rare individual. A real Bronx Old Timer.

(Washington comment:- "Good deal of value as social history.... Reminiscences recorded, too sketchy for use. But references in copy indicate possible fund of (early) American material, as well as material on horse-drawn trolley cars..."

## Library of Congress

(\*LW comment:- “These reminiscences of the Bronx of years ago have considerable interest, but are rather too fragmentary for our uses, in my opinion.”

(\*DS comment:- “Material as it is, not particularly useful. But mention of Blizzard and Blizzard anecdotes anecdote indicates possible fund of such stories. “Tin-panning” reference gives reason to believe that Mr. Paul may recall other local customs and related incidents, if properly cultivated. Bronx Old Timers' Society, probably an excellent source of both contacts and material. Does the Society have a publication? Does it keep minutes of its meetings?”

### Introduction to MR. PAUL'S STORY

On Tinton Avenue in the lower East Bronx, there is an old, three story, frame house. Thirty years ago, Tinton Ave. was a tree lined, suburban, street. Now it is bleak and stony. Apartment houses old and new, blot out the sun. The little, private house is ever in shadow, gripped in the vise of two dirty, brick tenements.

Mr. P., a well-preserved, reticent man, 81 years of age, has lived in this old-fashioned house for the past 35 years. In his backyard he has a small garden, in which he cultivates flowers. This patch of earth, over which, clothes lines, fire escapes, aerial wires and tenement dust, break the light, is Mr. P.'s last tangible relation with the old Bronx.

Suspicious at first, Mr. P. later warmed up a bit and told gave a kaleidoscopic impression of the Bronx as it was years ago: names, places, habits and customs.

There is an organization in the Bronx, called the Old Timers' Society. Mr. P. is one of its members. A rare individual. A real Bronx Old Timer.

Earl Bowman: “Mr. Paul's Story”

## Library of Congress

Material as it is, not particularly useful. But mention of Blizzard and Blizzard anecdote indicates possible fund of such stories. "Tin-panning reference gives reason to believe that Mr. Paul may recall other local customs and related incidents if properly cultivated. Bronx Old Timers Society probably an excellent source of both contacts and material. Does the Society have a publication? Does it keep minutes of its meetings? D. Silver

These reminiscences of the Bronx of years ago have considerable interest, but are rather too fragmentary for our uses, in my opinion. lw

### GROUPS, GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

#### REMINISCENSES - BRONX - Early

(Blizzard)

(Localisms)

#### WASHINGTON COMMENT:

Good deal of value as social history. See Comment on Louisa G. Dawe story.

### FOLKLORE

#### NEW YORK 1000

#### FORM C

State: New York

Name of Worker: Earl Bowman

Address: 86 West 12th St., New York City

## Library of Congress

Date: Aug, 22, 1938

Subject: GEORGE PAUL, Age. 81

953 Tinton Ave.

The Bronx, New York City

### MR. PAUL'S STORY:

"In 1863 my father opened a grocery and feed store at Elton Ave., and 157th Street, then known as Washington Ave., and [Prospect?] Street.

"In 1878 he opened a branch store at Washington Avenue and 169th Street under the name of John Paul & Son. Our next door neighbor was J. G. Daum, the baker, who was known throughout the Bronx for his rye bread and for his kindness to those in need. His son still carries on the business at the same spot.

"On the northwest corner was Ferdon's Market, next came Sherwood's Lamp and Oil Store, and then Haupman's Paint Store. Dr. Henwood lived an the [southwest?] corner and on the southeast corner was Houchin's home and factory.

"At Third Avenue was Jake Schappert's Market and John [Sauer's?] Shoe store. On the northwest corner was Wetzel's Saloon. Then came John [Danm's?] Cigar Store, and farther up the block Pfluger's Barber Shop, Conrad [Danm?], the tailor and Richard [Danm?], the baker.

"At the northeast corner was Reinhart's Grocery and Feed Store.

2

"In 1886 I moved to Third Avenue, when the elevated was being built. A station was located at our corner.

## Library of Congress

"Then came the blizzard. Dreeste's bakery wagon got stuck in the drifts at our corner and could not be moved for three days. All the bread in the wagon was carried into my store and we sold every loaf. The horses were placed in my barn and had a good rest.

"Though I have lived in the Bronx seventy-four years, I feel like a stranger here now. I can walk for an hour and not meet a person I know. To meet old friends and schoolmates I attend meetings of the "Old Timer's of The Bronx," as I am fortunate enough to be a member.

"There we talk about old times, and it is: 'Mr. Paul, do you remember when the boys used to hang around outside your store and you put up a sign in your store window, 'Twelve loafers wanted to stand on this corner?' We did better than that; there were thirteen of us. And on my way home from school I used to upset your barrels!'"

"Remember old 'Dutch Five' Engine Company, how they used to celebrate after every fire? And how your father doctored some bologna with pepper to cure them of their 'taking ways?'

"As I walk down 163rd Street to Washington Avenue, memory brings back the Melrose and Morrisania of seventy years ago. The building which was 'Pickle' Snider's pickle factory is still standing and looks pretty good too. But Bruckner's Brewery,

3

"Stocker's Slaughter House, Knapp's Lumber Yard and Charlie White's coal yard vanished long ago. Nearby was Mr. Short's fine garden in which were several cherry trees. My father used to buy the cherries to sell in our store and my brother Henry and I had the fun of picking them.

## Library of Congress

"Conover's had a fine rose garden which we used to pass when on our way to the baseball games at Union Ball Grounds. Bob Nicholson too, the real estate man, whose house was left high up on the rocks when Elton Avenue was cut down.

"I remember the night somebody set fire to a carload of hay belonging to Alonzo Carr. It was a big fire, and the engines pumped water out of Mill Creek, the brook for which Brook Avenue is named. I remember 'Old Pokey' crossing the railroad trestle over the brook back of Old Melrose School. Sometimes the boys jumped on the cowcatcher of the engine while in motion. One day Tom Condon tried to jump on but missed and was killed.

"We used to go bobbing for eels in the brook and caught some too, but they were not very big.

"Jonathan Hyatt was principal of Melrose School at that time. I don't think there was ever a better principal in The Bronx, but no school has ever been named after him. Our Board of Education ought to do him this honor.

"One day about seventy-three years ago, while going through Peggy Woods I found a nice baseball bat, which I have kept all 4 these years.

"I remember the 'tin-pannings' at weddings. The boys with their pans would make a great racket until someone came out and gave them money for a treat, or else invited them into the house for refreshments. One man was not so good natured and sent for Judge Hauptmann who arrested two of the biggest boys."

\*\*\* [WORKER'S?] COMMENT:

The foregoing is given in Mr. Paul's own words, without editing or change; and I was careful to preserve his exact expression.

## Library of Congress

Mr, Paul is 81 years of age and it required three visits before I could secure the story from him. He is quite well preserved; lives in the same house he has owned for more than 35 years, an old fashioned three story frame structure. He has a beautiful garden in the rear and no doubt has been preserved in health by his interest in the cultivation of flowers, etc.

Personally, he is rather reticent and suspicious, so it was necessary to "cultivate" him a bit.

It might be that he could later be induced to talk of many things that would be of interest.

It will be noted that he used the words "Tin-panning" for what in some parts of the country is the old-fashioned charivari. No doubt editorial scrutiny will reveal other 'localisms' in his expressions.

"Old Tobey"...evidently was the name they applied to the railroad engine mentioned. The terse sentence: 'One day Tom Condon tried to jump on it but missed and was killed.'

Seems to me a classic in simplicity and tremendous tragedy. Respectfully,

—Earl Bowman